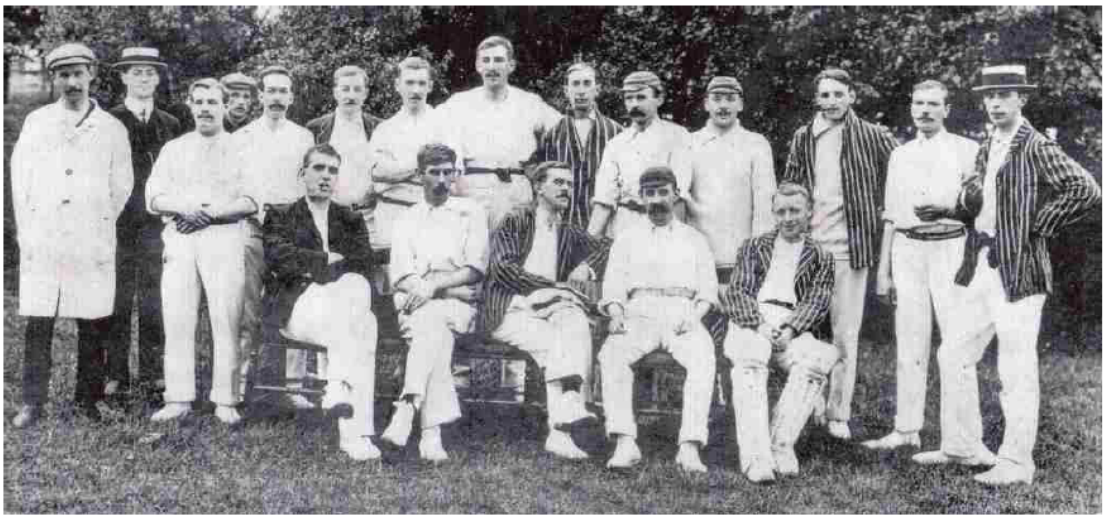
The Clock Tower

The Newsletter of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Issue Number 11: August 2008



Frindsbury Cricketers

This photograph from the collection of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA) Chairman, Tessa Towner, will evoke memories of long hot (mythical) Kentish summers.

Standing from left, John Walter (Tessa's grandfather), 4th on left at back his brother Arthur (with peaked cap), known as Tom. Seated with cap, another brother, George Walter, landlord of the Royal Oak pub, Frindsbury. Also in the photo are probably several of the seven Skilton brothers, it was their father Joseph Skilton along with the Rev Jackson, vicar of Frindsbury, who started the Cricket Club in 1885. The date of the photograph has been narrowed down to about 1907 to 1909. Other possible names playing at this time were the Anderson brothers Colin and Donald (both killed in WWI), W.J.Coleman, A.Francis, H.Harpum, M.W.Lewry, A.Lines, A.E.Loach, N.McKechnie, D.Nye, and A.Ring.

Inside this issue...

We say goodbye to Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist. After 18 years at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Stephen left in June for a new post as Archive Service Manager at Essex Record Office, Chelmsford.

One of Stephen's farewell gifts was a framed photograph, taken by FOMA Chairman Tessa Towner, of him on his boat, taken from the Kingswear Castle during the trip on Saturday 31st May 2008 to follow the 100th Medway Barge Match.

About The Clock Tower

The Clock Tower is the quarterly journal produced and published by the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA).

Editorial deadlines
The first Monday (or Tuesday when a Bank Holiday occurs) of February, May, August and November. Articles, letters, photos and any information to be considered for inclusion in the journal must be received before this date by the Editor, Mrs Amanda Thomas, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire; amanda@ajthomas.com

The copy deadline for Issue 12 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 3rd November 2008.

Publication date
The third Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

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Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information
The logo for *The Clock Tower* was designed by Bob Ratcliffe.
The banner design (incorporating the logo) and the title *The Clock Tower* were designed by Alexander Thomas.
The Clock Tower is also available on: http://ajthomas.com/theclocktower

Further Information
Further information on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/ or by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060; email: malsc@medway.gov.ukmedway.gov.uk.
General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the Secretary, Odette Buchanan: 72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE. Telephone: 01634 718231; email: odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk
Membership enquiries should be temporarily directed to the Membership Secretary (temporary post), Jean Skilling: 15 Port Close, Lordswood, Chatham, ME5 8DU, Kent. jean.skilling@blueyonder.co.uk

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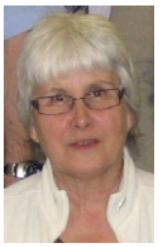
From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



Welcome to our August edition of *The Clock Tower*. I am at a disadvantage this time as having been in Devon for two months looking after my sister following major surgery I feel very out of touch with what has been going on with the Friends and at MALSC. Having said that, there are plenty of reports in this issue by other members of events that have taken place.

That said, I did go on the Kingswear Castle trip on 31st May to follow the annual 100th Medway Barge Match. It was a wonderful day, lovely weather, but with little wind, which was not what the contestants wanted. There were some two dozen or so barges competing, and although it did not take part in the race, the oldest barge on the river that day was the Cygnet, built by Curel's of Frindsbury in 1881. This was of great personal interest as for many years I have been researching the Curels for one of their descendants in Australia.

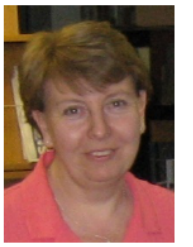
John Curel came to Frindsbury from Norfolk in 1820 to take over the Quarry Yard and for the next 76 years built barges on the River Medway. After the death of George Henry Curel in 1896, the yard was taken over by Gill's, yet another well known local family of barge builders. There are several graves of this family in All Saints Frindsbury churchyard.

Finally, you will be pleased to hear that FOMA plans to have a stall at the Kent Family History Society Open Day (http://www.kfhs.org.uk/imp-dates.htm) on 6th September at the Pilkington Building in the Universities at Medway at Chatham Maritime. Do please come and meet us. We also hope to be at the Museum of Kent Life's Kent History Sunday on 7th September (www.kentmuseum.co.uk/).

Photographs of the 100th Medway Barge Match taken by FOMA Committee Member Elaine Gardner are featured on the back page of this issue.

News and Events

Cindy O'Halloran, Friends' Minutes Secretary



The 100th Medway Barge Match

On Saturday 31st May 2008, FOMA members boarded the Kingswear Castle for the first trip of the summer to follow the 100th Medway Barge Match. Elaine Gardner, FOMA Committee Member and volunteer (see her article later in this edition) took some photographs of the day's events which can be seen on the back page.

FOMA at the London Marathon

On 13th April 2008 April Witheridge, daughter of John Witheridge, FOMA Vice Chairman, ran in the London Marathon for the first time, completing the gruelling course in 5 hours and 55 minutes. April raised a fantastic £500 for MALSC and to say thank you there was a special presentation on Saturday 7th June.

Medway Mayor, Councillor David Carr, and April Witheridge at the presentation. Photograph taken by Richard J Church (Publisher) and courtesy of Sue Wood (Editor), Peninsula Times.

Stephen Dixon

On 4th June 2008, MALSC staff hosted a farewell party for Borough Archivist Stephen Dixon. After 18 years at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Stephen left MALSC in June for a new post as Archive Service Manager at Essex Record Office, Chelmsford. Staff put on a fabulous spread and Norma Crowe and Derek Moore entertained with a song about the Darland Banks. Stephen seemed overwhelmed by all his presents, which included the framed photograph featured on the front cover, book tokens and honorary life membership of FOMA. Stephen received the certificate of life membership following the presentation to April Witheridge at MALSC on 7th June (and as above).

FOMA members tuck into the party food at Stephen Dixon's leaving do

Stephen opens his book tokens

Kingswear Castle Trip, 5th July 2008

Around 15 FOMA members joined the Kingswear Castle for the second very enjoyable day trip. We had beautiful sunny weather, even if the wind was rather blustery. We left Thunderbolt pier at 11 am, and sailed up to Fort Darnett, passing Chatham Dockyard, Upnor Castle and the Strand; Bob Ratcliffe gave us his usual informative narrative as we sailed. We then headed back up river - noting the new Medway Council logo prominently displayed on the old Lloyd's building! Coming up into Limehouse Reach, Bob pointed out the new riverside walk, which was being enthusiastically used by some fishermen, cyclists and pedestrians. Unfortunately a week later the metal railings were enthusiastically raided by scrap thieves, forcing its closure to the public. As we travelled up river past the Medway Bridges we encountered the Admiralty Cruise and escort flotilla who fired their canon in greeting as we passed. The incoming Mayor, Cllr David Carr seemed to be enjoying himself enormously.

The mayor of Medway, Cllr David Carr, waving (in the distance) to FOMA members on board the Kingswear Castle

The landscape became increasingly rural, with wildlife aplenty, herons fishing among the reed beds. The peaceful atmosphere was wonderful, and so different from bygone times when the same area had been industrialised. The river course meandered through meadows, past the churches of Burham and Wouldham, the new housing development at Halling and up to the paper mills at New Hythe. Here the Kingswear turned back towards Chatham, where Veteran's Day was in full swing at the Dockyard with medal-bedecked folk and their families enjoying themselves. We returned windswept and sunburned but thoroughly entertained.

Bombing of the Drill Hall Shed, 8th July 2008

We had a full house for the talk given by Ben Watson of the Drill Hall Library and Marcus Bedingfield on the bombing of the Drill Hall Shed. On Monday 3rd September 1917 the building was being used as overflow sleeping accommodation for around 900 naval ratings. A raid by German Gotha aeroplanes destroyed the glass roof and concrete floor of the building contributing to the terrible carnage that night and the death of around 130. Many of the victims were incorrectly identified as their remains were scattered and mutilated. Ben gave us an overview of the raid and the building, whilst Marcus followed up with the story of the victims and their backgrounds, which he has painstakingly researched. Copies of the research have been deposited with us at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC).

Rochester Cathedral Visit 29th July

Nineteen FOMA members got together for a guided tour of the Cathedral guided by Bob Ratcliffe. Where would we be without him? We had the finer points of the architecture pointed out to us, and the transition of the styles explained. How many of us have wandered through the building without noting the sudden change of Norman arches to Early

Perpendicular? I know I have! We noted the remnants of original mediaeval tiles alongside Gilbert Scott's later work and the very old door hidden in a tower. Next we were taken to see the Cathedral Library where Pat Salter had displayed some of the photographs she is listing; we had time to look through the wonderful collection of books too. We ended our visit with a look at the Crypt and the very foundations of the building that Gundalf began so long ago. A guided tour of the Cathedral is certainly something to be recommended: there is so much to see which passes by the untutored eye.

If you are interested in helping Pat Salter identify some of the photographs mentioned above, she would be grateful for assistance. This will entail, among other things, bringing some binoculars and examining the many roof bosses and faces to be found in the Cathedral.

Archives Staff and other Activities

Interviews will shortly be underway to select our new Archivist and the vacant post of Archive Assistant will be advertised shortly. Janet Knight, our longest serving member of staff, will be part time as of September.

Staff at MALSC are compiling an exhibition about post war housing in Medway. If you have any photographs of prefabs, aluminium or Cornish housing that we can scan, we would be delighted to hear from you. We would also like some reminiscences of life on the new estates built after the war. Thank you to those who have already contributed pictures and personal stories.

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

4th August to 14th September
Exhibition: 150th Anniversary of the Strood to Canterbury Railway
Exhibitions are free to view.

6th August 7.30pm
A talk by Bob Ratcliffe:
Railways of Rochester
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

26th August 7.30pm
A talk by Bob Ratcliffe:
Railways of Rochester
This talk is to be repeated by popular request.
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

16th September to 24th October
Ad Perpetuam Memoriam- the 350th Anniversary of Oliver Cromwell's death
An exhibition by John Witheridge
Exhibitions are free to view.

30th September 7.30pm
A talk by John Witheridge:
Ad Perpetuam Memoriam- the 350th Anniversary of Oliver Cromwell's death
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

28th October to 5th December

Who? What? Where? When? Unidentified Photographs in the Archives. A look at some unidentified photographs held at MALSC. Come along and see if you can solve some of our puzzles. No prizes though!
An exhibition by Tessa Towner.
Exhibitions are free to view.
4th November 7.30pm
A talk by Irina Shub:
Reminiscence of an Immigrant - my life in Soviet Russia 1970-1990
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

4th December to 3rd January 2009
Post-war Housing Development in Medway
An exhibition by MALSC Staff
Exhibitions are free to view.

Wednesday 10th December 10.00 am to 12.00 noon
Mince Pie Day
at 2.30pm
A talk by Michael Gandy:
Seeing it through their songs
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Further information is available from Cindy O'Halloran, Friends' Minutes Secretary, at cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk or on +44 (0)1634 332238/332714.

Please note: You may be aware that Medway Council is being relocated to Gun Wharf. This move does not include the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and until further notice, we are still to be found in the Clock Tower building.

For Your Diary

FOMA plans to have a stall at the Kent Family History Society Open Day (http://www.kfhs.org.uk/imp-dates.htm) on 6th September at the Pilkington Building in the Universities at Medway at Chatham Maritime. Do please come and meet us. We also hope to be at the Museum of Kent Life's Kent History Sunday on 7th September (www.kentmuseum.co.uk/).

FOMA Members

JL Keys

166 City of Rochester HAA Battery R.A.

The article by Peter Burstow on the Borstal A.A. Battery in Issue 09 of *The Clock Tower* (February 2008) brought back some happy memories for me of time spent with my father at Fort Clarence. Between the wars, this was home to the 166 H.A.A. Battery Royal Artillery, a unit of the Territorial Army.

My father, George Leonard Keys, was the Battery Quartermaster Sergeant (BQMS) in the early and mid 1930s, and as pictured; my father is the chap on the left. At this time, the Battery was equipped with the new 3.7 inch guns which were housed in the drill shed on the raised hill of the fort. During the First World War it had served as a Heavy Siege battery on the Western Front, firing the massive 9.2 inch guns at the enemy supply lines and support trenches. My father had enlisted in 1913, but was not old enough to go to France until 1916 when he was 19 years of age. After the war, the unit reverted to being a part time Territorial Army unit, meeting perhaps one evening a week and generally on Sunday mornings.

The Sergeants' Mess and stores facilities of the unit in the 1930s were in the old fort building and I sometimes accompanied my father when he attended Sunday morning parades and training sessions. I must admit that it seems like an old pals' club when one looks back, as most of them had gone through WWI together and I knew some of them as adopted uncles.

Every summer we went off to Watchet in Somerset for a fortnight under canvas and live firing. The guns were situated on the clifftop overlooking the Bristol Channel and as there were usually several batteries there at any one time, there was much friendly rivalry as to which unit obtained the most hits. As the guns were firing out to sea, falling shrapnel presented no hazard and local fishing boats steered clear when the red flag was flying. The targets were either Queen Bee radio controlled pilotless planes or towed drogues. The latter were orange coloured sleeves towed by a plane, the hapless pilot of which no doubt wished had a longer tow rope. I remember my father saying that after the first week of one summer camp, they had shot down all the available Queen Bees (which I believe cost about £2,500 – a lot of money in those days), although some may have been recovered and repaired for re-use.

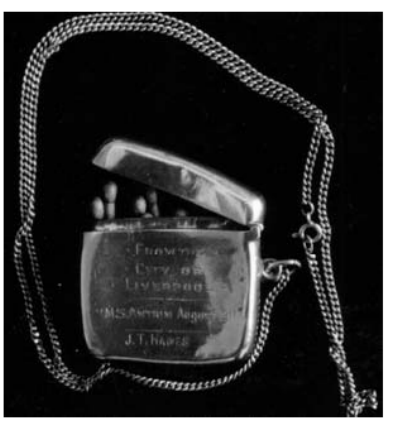
Whilst my dad obviously had to live in the camp, my mother would take my sister and myself to Watchet and lodge in the town. On one occasion, to my great delight, we stayed in a house adjacent to a single track railway which linked Watchet to Taunton to the east and Minehead to the west.

We always thought that 166 Battery was a bit superior to the rest, even then, and I remember one Sunday in 1940, when about 250 German bombers flew over the Medway Towns in perfect formation, going towards London. All was quiet, when suddenly the Borstal Battery

opened up and the first shots almost scored direct hits on the leading formation, which then broke up in confusion. All that pre-war practice certainly paid off.

Jean Slater

In this issue of *The Clock Tower*, FOMA member Jean Slater concludes her series about her grandfather, John Thomas Hawes, Mayor of Chatham. Jean's tales about Beve, as he was affectionately known in the family, could fill an entire book, and here she shares one last precious memory.



My most treasured possession is a silver matchbox (see picture), always worn on my grandfather's watch chain. The matchbox (about one and a quarter inches square) still contains his Swan Vesta matches, has a serrated edge on the base for striking, and a blue enamelled liverbird on the face. Engraved on the reverse is the following: *From the City of Liverpool, HMS Antrim. August 1911. J.T. Hawes.* Similar matchboxes were given to all the crew members of HMS Antrim to commemorate their role in quelling the unrest in Liverpool during the national seamen's strike of that year.

Readers' Letters

We welcome letters and emails from readers with their comments. If you have anything you would like to say please write to: Mrs Amanda Thomas, Editor, The Clock Tower, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5NS or email at amanda@ajthomas.com

21st July 2008

Hello from Vancouver, BC, Canada.
I was quite surprised and delighted to find a copy of your newsletter on the internet, specifically the article *A Descendant of Pocahontas*. [*The Clock Tower*, Issue 06, May 2007]. To wit, it was very exciting to read about ancestors of Stuart Cresswell's who happen to be in my family tree! Our common ancestry crosses in the mid-18th Century... I believe this would make Mr. Cresswell and myself approximately 5th Cousins...

Kind regards,
Paul Nash
The Editor has forwarded the full version of this correspondence to Mr Stuart Cresswell, descendant of Pocahontas and author of the May 2007 article.

15th July 2008

Dear Amanda,
Clock Tower readers may be interested to hear of the launch this month of the Penn(e)(y)f(e)ather newsletter. This has been distributed to 134 email addresses worldwide to folk that have shown an interest in the surnames in the last several years. The surnames are registered with the Guild of One Name Studies under reference 4433. The study's website can be found at www.pennyfather.com .
If you would like further details please contact Trevor Penfold at newsletter@pennyfather.com .

Best regards,

Trevor Penfold

Archives Update

April Lambourne, Archive and Local Studies Officer

Staffing

Staffing changes have been a challenge for MALSC recently and are likely to continue in a similar vein for the rest of 2008 causing a bit of a headache for our Development Manager, Lyn Rainbow. However, with the help of some familiar casual staff (Derek et al!) and Cindy's skill in juggling the timetable, the Centre remains open for business as usual. Following Stephen's departure to his new post as Archives Service Manager at Essex Record Office, the rest of us are naturally keen for a replacement Archivist to be appointed and interviews have been set for the end of August. Meanwhile, we understand Stephen is enjoying his new post, but not surprisingly he is finding the commuting from Gillingham to Chelmsford somewhat tiresome. I am delighted to report that Cindy has finally been appointed permanently to the post of Senior Archives and Local Studies Assistant, a job she has been undertaking very ably on secondment since Derek retired almost two years ago. We hope that will result in the Archives Assistant post also being advertised in the near future. Thank goodness Janet Knight is now planning to continue working, but part-time only, from the end of August under Medway's flexible retirement scheme. Catherine (Cat) Durkan, our Saturday assistant, is now a qualified teacher and will be taking a post teaching RE at Robert Napier School, Gillingham, in September. Cat has been at MALSC for around five and a half years and is a very popular member of staff - we wish her all the very best in her future career as a teacher. We look forward to a time when we have a full complement of staff once again and would like to thank everyone for their patience during some difficult times. A special thank you to all our volunteers who give us such great continuing support.

New Library Management System

Funding for a new computer system for libraries has been approved by Medway Council. Medway Libraries, as part of a consortium of libraries in the South East, has signed a contract with Civica. The new system has already been installed at Brighton and Hove Libraries and will go live in all Medway branch libraries on 1st March 2009. Most of the changes will be behind the scenes and all MALSC staff will be undertaking training on the new system. There will be no major change to the service that we offer at the Studies Centre but there will be a new look and feel to the public access computers and the library catalogue (not CityArk), which includes holdings of Local Studies book stock. Bookings for computers and printing will be handled by the system which will mean a fairer allocation of time on computers at busy periods and no wastage of paper on printing.

Accessions and a Donation

Our thanks to the North West Kent Family History Society for their donation of a large number of London and Kent parish registers on microfilm. If you are visiting, please ask at the counter if you would like to see these.

(DE1184) French hydrographic chart of the west coast of France and Bay of Biscay between La Pointe des Baleines and L'Etang d'Hourtin, showing the entrance to the River Gironde. Marked and signed by William (Bill) Sparks DSM, formerly of the Royal Marines (RM), to show his point of unloading from the submarine HMS Tuna at the start of Operation Frankton, the RM Boom Patrol Detachment's raid on Axis shipping at Bordeaux, [cf. Cockleshell Heroes] on 30 November 1942, on the occasion of *Cockleshell 85*, a re-enactment of

the raid by Gillingham Canoe Club, organised by Medway Rotary Club and hosted by the rotary clubs of Roubaix (Nord Departement), Blaye (Gironde Departement) and Bordeaux (Gironde Departement), summer 1985. Signed and witnessed by accompanying members of Medway Rotary Club on the same occasion. *Service Hydrographique de la Marine*, Paris, France, 1961. Corrected 1969. 41 ½" x 29 ¼" (1055mm x 745mm). 1 sheet, paper.
Scrapbook containing photographs of *Cockleshell 85* participants, typescript introductory note, list of objectives, potted biographies of participants, timetable and table of logistics, cuttings from Rotary International District 112 *Rotary News*, local French and local British newspapers (including *The News*, Portsmouth, Hampshire), and British national newspapers, reporting the event with obituaries of Bill Sparks (2002). 1 volume. 1985-2002.

(DE1185) Records of the Pavement Commissioners for St. Nicholas' Parish, Rochester and Strood, and their constituent committees, comprising: minute books 1769-1783 and 1853-1875, latter with index to business at rear. 2 volumes.
Printed booklet entitled *An act for paving, cleansing, lighting and watching the High Streets and Lanes in the Parish of Saint Nicholas within the City of Rochester and Parish of Strood in the County of Kent; and for making a road* [cf. New Road] *through Star Lane, across certain Fields adjoining thereto, to Chatham Hill in the said County.* 1769. 1 sheaf. Mutilated. [Archivist's note: These items are believed to have come from the former offices of Arnold, Tuff and Grimwade, later Martin Tolhurst Partnership, when they closed.cf. deposits 11E/2, DE200, DE547, DE548 and DE558]

(DE1186) Commonplace book or memorandum book of David Day of West Hill, [Frindsbury?], Rochester, esquire, landed proprietor and proprietor of Messrs. Day, Hulkes and Co., bankers, possibly with a few additions by others, containing instructions for his executors, statements of his personal finances, terriers of his estates in Kent and Hampshire, observations on estate management, religious homilies of Unitarian persuasion, transcript of a letter from Day to a Roman Catholic priest describing his religious persuasion (1807) (pp.37-45), instructions to his children, Biblical and literary quotations, transcript of article from the *General Evening Post* of 24 May 1808 reporting the prosecution of Rev. Francis Stone of Cold Norton, Essex, for preaching false doctrines and transcript of a sermon preached to Unitarian Christians by Rev. Joshua Toulmin DD (pp.61-144). With partial index at front. [1792] 1802-1809, 1834. 1 volume. UFP. [Archivist's note: Believed to have been contained among the records of Arnold, Tuff and Grimwade, later Martin Tolhurst Partnership, solicitors, of The Precincts, Rochester. For previous deposits see 11E/2, DE200, DE547, DE548, DE558 and DE1185]

(DE1187) Additional records of St. Mark's Parish Church, Canterbury Street, Gillingham, including: Guarded volume of correspondence between Rev. Alfred Willis of Strood and later New Brompton and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and Admiralty concerning the erection of a church and church school in New Brompton and the constitution of the parish, 1861-1871. 1 volume. Receipted bills for building St. Mark's Church 1862-1868. 1 guarded volume, dismounted. Photocopies of church building receipts (1862-1866) c.1980 (1 bundle). Bond for performance to build the church 1864 (1 item, paper). New Brompton Church of England School (St. Mark's Church Boys' School) log book 1905-1935. 1 volume. [Donated by P. Matthews, Northfleet] (restored to collection C/ES 153/8)

(DE1189) MS items transferred from the Local Studies Unit, Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, comprising: Additional Hogg MSS. Notebook compiled by P. Fitzgerald Hogg of 136 Palmerston Road, Chatham, antiquarian, containing list of Army officers and chaplains stationed in the Isle of Grain and vicinity during the Great War (1914-1918), arranged by regiment and giving rank, surname, initials and remarks as to movements, home addresses and whether killed or wounded in action, with some photographs and news cuttings; notes and news cuttings pertaining to Grain Martello Tower and other forts in and around the River Medway, the buildings of HM Dockyard, Chatham and the military and social history Sheerness and the Isle of Sheppey, with printed map of the Isle of Sheppey printed by W. Cole, Times Office, Sheerness. Compiled c.1914-c.1949. Contents dated c.1874-c.1949. 1 volume. [Formerly held at Chatham Library ref. KF/940
See also DE292, DE303, DE346 and DE1182].
Letter from W.S. Burton, Rosside House, Ulverston, Lancashire, a major in the Army Reserve, to his Aunt Laura, discussing the repair of a picture damaged at Windsor Castle, Berkshire, family proprietorships in Gillingham, history, land use and housing in the manor of West Court in Gillingham, the Royal Marines garrison in Chatham and mentioning members of Arnold, Dawes, Baker, Day and Downton families. 15 May 1914. 2 items, paper. [Formerly at Rochester Library ref GIL914].
Printed notice entitled *By the Queen a Proclamation for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for the preventing and punishing of Vice, Profaneness, and Immorality.* 1 broadsheet. 1837.
Audio magnetic recording tape of speeches at opening of Rainham Library. 29 March 1961. 1 reel and box. [Formerly at Gillingham Library ref. MG433(LIB)].

School records of Needham family of Oldham, Lancashire and Gillingham, comprising Oldham School Board child's school book (attendance and progress record) of Frederick Needham of 8 Roundthorn Road, Oldham, Lancashire 1879-1886 (1 booklet) and fortnightly and termly progress reports for Alfred Needham at Richmond Road Boys' School, Gillingham 1918-1925. 1 bundle, 20 items.
(DE1191) Additional records of Chatham Borough Council, formerly Chatham Local Board of Health, comprising General Board of Health hand-drawn and hand-coloured maps of Chatham, produced pursuant to the Public Health Act (1848). Surveyor Edward Gotto, 35A Great George Street, Westminster, Middlesex. 16 sheets each c.3' 2 ¼" x c.2' 2". Scale: 10': 1 mile. (District map scale: 2': 1 mile). 1852. Stamped and issued by the General Board of Health 1853.

(DE1192) Additional records of Medway Navigation company and successor authorities, comprising: Map of Upper River Medway between Maidstone Bridge and Forest Row (Forestrow), Brambletye, Sussex, surveyed by John Bowra of Tonbridge. With key to stone bridges, timber bridges, foot bridges, wears and locks. 1739. 8' 2" x 2' 2 ½". Parchment segments.
Cash book 1740-1757. 1 volume.
Minute book 1740-1765. 1 volume.
Index to Medway Conservancy minute books 1-6 (1765-1842), compiled c.1850. 1volume.
Index to Medway Conservancy minute books 7 (1842) onwards, compiled c.1875. 1 volume.
Lock-keeper's copy of printed Act of Parliament entitled An Act for repealing an Act passed in the Thirty-second Year of His present Majesty's Reign, for improving the Navigation of the River Medway, from the Town of Maidstone, through the several Parishes of Maidstone, Boxley, Allington, and Aylesford, in the County of Kent; and for the better and more effectually improving the Navigation of the said River 22 June 1822. 1 volume.
Printed pamphlet comprising Upper Medway Navigation and Conservancy Act 1914. 1 pamphlet.
Printed item comprising Mr. Friend's copy of Minutes of evidence taken before the committee on the Medway Navigation Bill in the House of Commons, session 1836 with covering letter from W.H. Poole, 44 Earl Street, Maidstone, architect and surveyor, to John Arkcoll Esq., Foley House, Maidstone 1912. 2 items.
Scrapbook containing news cuttings and 5 picture postcards, pertaining to the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board and River Medway 1934-1938. 1 volume and loose enclosures.
Binder containing classification of river traffic merchandise; Canal Rates, Tolls and Charges No.2 (Bridgewater [sic] etc and Canals) Order Confirmation Act 1894; cutting from The Times 19 January 1915; typescript list of lighters belonging to William Cory and Son Ltd., Rochester; and Upper Medway Conservancy bill for barge tolls to a Mr. Hutson. 1 binder.
Typescript Kent River Board Upper Medway Division River Eden and Edenbrook report on sluices by divisional engineer 1958. 1 booklet.
Photographs (some aerial) mainly of flooding at points along the Upper River Medway 1960. (1 folder, 15 panels).
Printed linen notices warning against prosecution for damage to Board's property c.1920. (3 sheets).
Photograph of bridge over marshy ground, four men present, photographer R. Hider, Sheerness, c.1910.
Photograph of bridge and village with bystanders, photographer R. Hider, Sheerness, c.1910
Photograph of workmen constructing lock gates [?], East Peckham [?], photographer R. Hider, Sheerness, c.1910. Photograph of bridge at East Peckham, with bystanders, photographer R. Hider, Sheerness c.1910.
Photograph of tug Keaton towing barge Beaver from Maidstone to Tonbridge with official party on board on occasion of official opening of navigation after completion of reconstruction under Upper Medway Navigation and Conservancy Act 1911, photographer B.C. Flemens, 191 High Street, Tonbridge 31 August 1915.
Photograph of East Farleigh bridge, weir and lock c.1930 mounted on card 36" x 21 ½". Photographs of the flood of 19 November 1911 at East Farleigh, Teston Lock, Stoneham Lock, Wateringbury Bridge, Branbridges (East Peckham) and Hampstead Lock, Yalding, exposed 21 November 1911. 9 items mounted on one card.
Photographs of River Eden flooded 1968. 1 wallet.
Title deeds and litigation papers 1742-1929. 2 bundles.
Correspondence between Ministry of Labour and National Service and Kent Rivers Catchment Board,
Maidstone, concerning named employees, reserved occupation status, conscription and reinstatement after war service c.1942-c.1947. 1 bundle.
Copy of William Chadwell Mylne and John Walker's report on the Medway Navigation of 1829, copy made c.1852. 1 sheaf.
Family scrapbook of Kirby family of Bishop Auckland, County Durham, King's Heath, Birmingham and later of Southborough, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells c.1900-c.1984. 1 volume.
Volume labelled stores book, Upper Medway Conservancy containing religious homilies [Methodist?] and Biblical quotations and loose enclosures including blank timekeeper's reports and Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board stationery c.1920. 1 volume.

Photographs partly Kirby or Spires family related [?], partly Conservancy related, including verse, pencil drawings and watercolours 18th Century to 1970s. 1 bundle.
Commonplace book, containing aphorisms, homilies, verse and engravings c.1860-c.1910.1 volume. Mutilated.
Sale particulars possibly connected with Tonbridge Cottage Property Ltd., photographs and plans of the River Medway and printed matter 1836-1975. 1 bundle. [Archivist's note: This collection appears to have been passed down from John W. Kirby (died 1944), collector of the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board and who was also connected with the Medway Conservancy Board, to Kirby or Spires family. J.W. Kirby was a Methodist lay minister and an accountant and secretary of Tonbridge Cottage Property Ltd.]

Volunteering...it's a whole new way of life!

Elaine Gardner

FOMA Committee Member Elaine Gardner was born in Surrey but has lived and worked in Medway since 1952. She taught maths at Medway secondary schools and has always been interested in local history. Elaine is also a member of the Rochester Society and has been a Rochester Guide for about four years. She is one of a group of guides organised by the City of Rochester Society (www.city-of-rochester.org.uk) who leads the popular Open Walks organised every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday around the historic parts of Rochester.

The idea of becoming a volunteer in local history research was planted at a City of Rochester Society when an announcement was made asking for volunteers interested in the Victoria County History's *England's Past for Everyone* programme which was about to begin under the then Kent Team Leader Dr Andrew Hann. At the time I was still working, but shortly afterwards, when the formation of FOMA was proposed, I took myself along to the inaugural meeting and duly signed up. I have been interested in local history for a very long time, having lived in the Medway area for over 50 years, and was already a Rochester guide and a custodian at Restoration House and have copies of most of the local history books published in the past 30 years on my bookshelves. Rather surprisingly, I had only once visited the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Archive Centre and really had no idea of just what went on there.

At that inaugural meeting we were asked to fill in a form to indicate what, if any, research we would be interested in helping with. I ticked a few boxes and indicated I would be interested in volunteering on the archive project to sort, preserve, and catalogue the many boxes of Rochester archives once I had retired from teaching.

Education……"Ah ha!" thought Stephen Dixon as he was putting together the Heritage Lottery Bid and looking at the list of people who had expressed an interest. "We need the education element, could you come along to a meeting to discuss getting educational links?" I obeyed and even got some of my colleagues interested, but it took quite a bit to convince Stephen that actually I was a *maths* teacher and my knowledge of history and geography departments in schools was somewhat limited!
So, pulled into the system and now retired, I went along to last year's Volunteers Day where we had the opportunity to find out about the research help the Archive staff were hoping to find. Since the work on the Rochester archive material depended on acquiring Heritage Lottery funding, I thought the work Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe, was undertaking on the history of Rochester High Street sounded interesting, [see Norma Crowe's article, *Watts' Alms Houses Reminiscences* in *The Clock Tower*, Issue 08, November 2007] and I agreed to take on the task of searching through old directories for shop advertisements. I began with the Williams 1849 Directory.

Norma's plan was to set up a file with a section for each of the present High Street buildings containing the sources of any information available for that building. Easy enough, I thought. Norma had put a recording sheet in a wallet along with a drawing of the front elevation of each property, and all I had to do was find the right page and note down the reference to the use of that property in 1849. *City Tea Mart, 124 Eastgate*….where's that? *Alldridge's Warehouse, 213 High Street, entrance near the Guildhall ,* surely 213 High Street is nowhere near the Guildhall, it's well on the way towards Chatham! It was at this point that Norma

pointed out that the High Street numbering pre 1881 had started with number 1 up at Rochester Bridge on the north side of the street, worked its way along to the court house near the station, then crossed the road and worked its way back to end at number 218 at the Crown Hotel. Poor Janet Knight from the Local Studies team had been tearing her hair out trying to sort this out!

Many of the adverts and entries in the directories did not have a number attached to the property at all. Presumably in 1849 everybody knew *G Reynolds, Bookseller, Eastgate,* so no number was needed, but this is not very helpful today, and so began my determination to get to the bottom of the numbering mystery.

"There are sets of re-numbering record books in the archive, " Cindy O'Halloran told me, so I duly turned up at the Archives desk with my two photos and proof of identity for my Archive Research Reader's Ticket; without one of these, no one can look at archival material.

Six months on, with lists of High Street residents from four directories, a copy of the 1864 plan of the High Street and hours spent trawling through the first two re-numbering books for 1881 and 1894, I *think* I am getting somewhere, though there are still areas of confusion. For example, why was there a number 109 on both sides of the street? Why were there two sets of 125/126 on either side of the Star Hill junction? People have commented that all there seem to be in the High Street these days are pubs and restaurants, well nothing changes. In the 50 years between the 1832 Wright's Directory and the renumbering in 1881 there were over 20 pubs, hotels or dining establishments between the bridge and the station and thank goodness there were because they were all marked on the 1864 map by name and with many of them still in existence today, these are only fixed reference points I have! There are still a couple more sets of re-numbering to work through and I think 1910 comes next, but needless to say I am hooked and so determined to get it sorted I can't possibly stop now.

In the time I have spent at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre I am slowly discovering the vast wealth of material, expert knowledge and help that is available to anyone wanting to research a local topic, including family history (Family History Society members are regularly on hand to help those tracing their ancestors). I have even been persuaded to join the FOMA committee, and despite this last point, I do recommend volunteering...it's a whole new way of life!

In this issue of The Clock Tower, Dr Sandra Dunster Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone (EPE) *discusses how volunteers, both old and new, have come together on the Medway Towns Project*

Dickensian Days

Jean Slater

John Thomas Hawes, Mayor of Chatham was the grandfather of FOMA member Jean Slater. Born in Chatham in 1932, Jean was fortunate in being old enough to share some of the thrills and pageantry that came with her grandfather's role as Mayor from 1938 to 1945. Now living in Felpham, West Sussex, Jean keeps her ties with Chatham through family and the Old Girls' Association of the Chatham Grammar School.

To follow is the last in a series of three articles containing extracts and photographs from the pictorial diaries of J.T. Hawes, affectionately known as Beve, now held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. Whilst this article concentrates on his life during the Second World War, Beve was also well known for his portrayal of Charles Dickens.

Part Three: Beve and the War Effort in Chatham

John Thomas Hawes, or Beve, as he was always known to us, began his political life in St Michael's Ward Chatham in 1933. He had little idea that he would soon be at the helm of the war effort, particularly with his close links to the navy and dockyard.

On 24th May 1939, Beve had the great pleasure of conferring the Freedom of the Borough on Admiral Sir Edward RGR Evans, universally known as Evans of the Broke. He had been an intrepid Arctic explorer and subsequently a staunch friend to the borough in his capacity as Commander in Chief of The Nore. For this wonderful day, I remember wearing a lovely new dress of buttercup yellow with smocking on the bodice. At the end of the proceedings I had the honour to present the bouquet to Lady Evans.

When war broke out on 3rd September 1939, Beve immediately realised the significance Chatham would assume as a naval base and as a target for the enemy. The Town Hall had huge concrete blast walls built around it and the basement housed the headquarters of the Air Raid Precautions wardens (ARP). It was also the control centre for plotting aircraft and deploying help when bombs fell (towards the end of the war I was even allowed to press the button for the all clear siren – what a thrill).

On 1st January 1940 the keel of the submarine HMS Umpire was laid down in the dockyard. My grandmother, Lizzie Hawes, was invited to perform the launch and Beve saw to it that I too was present. Later that same year on a bitterly cold December 30th, high up on number seven slip, I stood next to my grandmother and witnessed the launch of the Umpire. It is a moment I will never forget: the cheering of the dockyard workers and the grace of the newborn craft slipping down into the River Medway. As a memento of the launch, my grandmother was given and ashtray made from the metal used for the building of HMS Umpire. This is now on permanent loan to the Submarine Museum in Portsmouth. The curator, the late Gus Britten, was disappointed I had no photographs of the launch, but naturally cameras were forbidden at such events during the war.

Sadly Umpire met a tragic end, as on 18th July 1941, while sailing north in convoy, she was rammed by a friendly ship. There were only nine survivors – this loss was keenly felt by my grandparents and the whole of the Medway Towns.

Beve's work for charities and the war effort was prodigious. It seemed to me that nearly every Saturday I was out with a collecting box. The Spitfire Fund, Red Cross, Services Benevolent funds, all had a helping hand. Early in the war, Jack Buchanan organised a dance at the Town Hall and raised £39 for the Spitfire Fund. Beve's enthusiasm for the Lifeboat Appeal is illustrated by his calling on naval friends to help pull a lifeboat around Chatham on a swelteringly hot day. Dressed in oilskins and urging folk to donate through a loud hailer, Beve was absolutely exhausted by the end of the day – I know because I was there.

The Lifeboat Appeal. Jean Slater is the young lady standing at the front left with her knee bandaged.

At about this time, I recall everyone donated anything they had which was made of aluminium. Saucepans and egg poachers were particularly prized as they could be used for aircraft manufacture. Chatham's strong ties with Malta were strengthened by Beve sending 200 guineas to General Dobbie, once a popular General Officer commanding in Chatham. This gift was to bring relief to the island after its terrible onslaught by air.

Beve seemed to involve the navy and Royal Marines whenever he could at civic functions. For example, the opening of a savings centre in Military Road had Royal Marine buglers sounding a fanfare. Even now I cannot resist a marine band. On many a Sunday Beve would lead the dignitaries behind the marine band from the Town Hall to St Mary's church whilst I happily marched along the path.

In 1942, Beve had the idea of sending all Chatham men held as prisoners of war (POWs) a signed photo of himself, including greetings from home. I have often wondered if any of these were actually received. In the same year, Lady Violet Astor opened a huge toy fair to raise cash for POW parcels; she told us that parcels costing ten shillings (50p) were regularly sent to our boys. I remember I came home from this evening with a huge grey toy cat, about three feet high! My grandmother too worked ceaselessly for the war effort, heading up a team of knitters providing balaclavas, mittens and other clothing. 4,000 items were sent off in the first few months, which must have been very welcome on the Arctic convoys. My grandmother also masterminded the opening and counting of hundreds of collection boxes, mostly full of coppers, but it all added up. Many firms and individuals also donated, from a few pounds to a few shillings. A ten year old Teddy Bates (of the Chatham drapers' family) wrote to Beve: " Dear Mr Mayor, I have been picking and selling blackberries at 6d a pound for your fund and have collected £2 2/-. I hope it will be useful. I was very thrilled at being allowed to get in the German plane at the car park and this is what gave me the idea for collecting for your fund." Teddy's contribution represented the picking and sale of 168 pounds of blackberries – no small feat.

We were staying in Cornwall with one of Beve's brothers when the joyful news came over the wireless of Victory in Europe. It must have been the 8 am news as I ran shouting out to the cottage on the other side of the lane, whereupon Beve stuck his head out of a tiny

bedroom window! We then came home to celebrate. Military Road was thronged, the marine band was playing in the Town Hall and everyone was dancing and being very jolly. Beve went out on the balcony many times that evening and returned the waves.

At the end of the war, Beve and my grandmother were invited to the Mansion House in London to meet King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. My mother and I went too and I have never travelled before or since in such a large car. When Beve was proposed as mayor for a record breaking seventh term, his proposer, Councillor Jimmy Presnail said, "When historians of the future write of the days when England's greatest son, Winston Churchill, steered Britain through troubled waters, local historians will have a record of John Hawes as the father, guide and philosopher of the council, whom he served loyal and true."

John Thomas Hawes, or Beve, pictured in 1940 at Capstone Farm.

Edwin Harris – Recollections of Rochester

Janet Knight, Local Studies, *The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre*

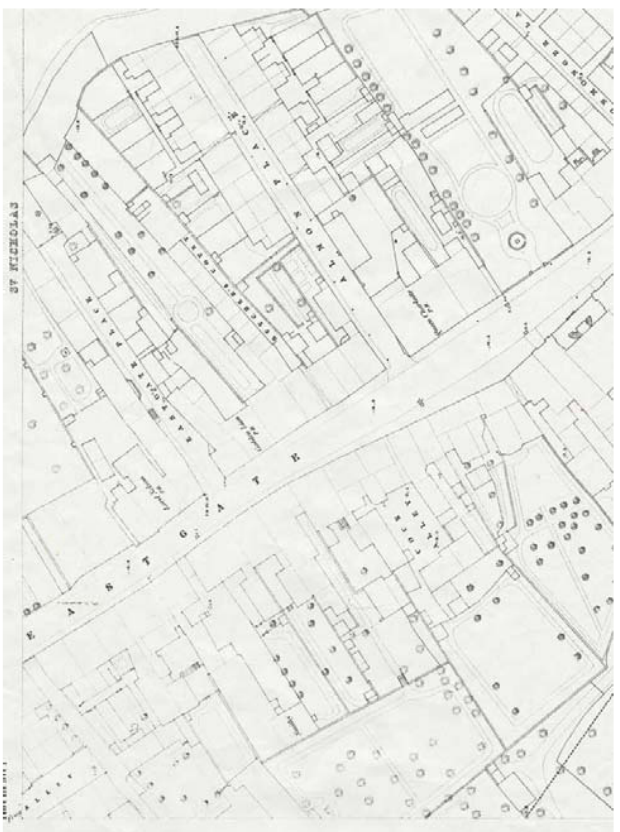
Janet Knight has worked at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre for over 16 years. She started work as assistant to Pat Salter and later transferred to Local Studies, working with Norma Crowe. Pat Salter's interest in Edwin Harris fired Janet's own enthusiasm and she has become another eager member of the Edwin fan club. Janet is often heard to say, "I wonder what Edwin has to say on the matter…"

In the fourth of her series, Janet reproduces Edwin Harris' thoughts on Butcher's Court, from his 1930 work, Recollections of Rochester.

"I suppose if anyone at the present time enquired for Butcher's-court very few would be able to tell where it is situated.

Yet half-a-century ago it was well known to all the dwellers in Eastgate, the hawkers, the tally-men and the police, who were often called upon to settle *neighbourly* disputes, family disagreements and political arguments. Many times I have been awakened by cries of, "Murder!" "Help!" "Police!" "Mr Harris!" and, hastily dressing I have gone down and poured oil on troubled waters, which was usually efficacious. I never had a quarrel with any of the residents, and I always found them civil and kindly disposed.

Butcher's-court is situated at the rear of 151, my old home. It was originally approached through the wooden-floored passage between our shop and No 153 Eastgate. When in 1887 Mr. John T. Prall bought no. 1 Almond Place, he made an entrance at the side of it for his tenants in Butcher's-court.



City Plan of Rochester 1866 -showing Butchers Court at the rear of Almon Place; from the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

The court consists of eight two roomed cottages. The first five are very old, and no doubt formed part of the stabling at the time our house was an inn. My reason for thinking this was the case is that when we removed the old wooden floors we found stable rubble pavement underneath. No. 5 was the only cottage that possessed a cellar.

Almon Place in 1988 - Almon Place runs between The Queen Charlotte and the Florists; from the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

The three bottom cottages were built about the year 1850, previous to which time the site was occupied by a soot shoot, covered by a heavy tiled roof supported by four wooden posts and somewhat resembling a giant four-post bedstead.

One Sunday morning the decayed posts gave way and the entire roof fell with a crash into the loose soot in the pit below causing it to float all over the district and putting the neighbours houses in mourning. After this catastrophe three cottages were built, bringing the number up to eight."

To read more funny tales on Butcher's Court, visit us at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Strood, and ask for *Recollections of Rochester No.18*.

Sir Cloudesley Shovell and the 1707 Loss of The Association

Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian

In the second part of three, Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, looks at Sir Cloudesley Shovell's background and how he came to have a lasting place in the history of Rochester.

Part Two: The Navy and Foreign Policy in the 17th Century

Sir Cloudesley Shovell, the admiral who made his home at Crayford and became MP for Rochester, is associated locally with Rochester's Corn Exchange and Guildhall Chamber.

It is a sad fact that to the wider world Sir Cloudesley Shovell is remembered, if he is known at all, as the naval officer responsible for one of the greatest losses of men and ships in peacetime in our maritime history. In October 1707 he was Admiral of the Fleet returning to England from the summer campaign in the Mediterranean, and mistook his bearings. This resulted in the loss of four ships and over 1600 men on the fearsome granite reefs around the Isles of Scilly.

Sir Cloudesley Shovell, Reproduced with the kind permission of The Guildhall Museum, Rochester

Sir Cloudesley Shovell has been largely forgotten in the story of our proud naval history. But in his day, a time of political turmoil and change, Sir Cloudesley Shovell was as famous as Nelson was to be in his. He died at the height of his career, when he was recognised as a skilful naval tactician, a safe pair of hands, and a commander who looked out for the welfare of his men. In short he was a man whose judgement could be trusted. But he lost his life through misadventure and error rather than battle wounds, and consequently posterity has not been kind to him.

Throughout our history the naval fleet has been used to further the prosperity and security of the nation, adopting strategies of defence and aggression according to the circumstances of the time. This was especially true of the 17th century, when enmities and conflicts with other nations flared up in succession. Rivalries with Spain, France and Holland resulted in a bewildering series of wars, with sea battles and skirmishes in the Channel, the North Sea, around French and Spanish ports, in the Mediterranean waters and as far afield as the West Indies.

Each year the monarch issued orders to the naval commanders, who would plan a summer campaign to satisfy the demands and achieve the desired ends. Action rarely took place between October and April, since the seas were too treacherous in the winter months.

Added to this struggle for power there was a constant threat from the lands bordering the southern Mediterranean known as the Barbary Coast, with pirates and privateers preying on

unguarded shipping. So the Navy had an additional important role as escort to merchant shipping; protecting the trade to and from the motherland to its colonies and allies. Flotillas of merchant ships were escorted by naval vessels en route for the Mediterranean or the West Indies. Whenever possible, convoy duties and complying with campaign orders were combined.

This is the backcloth to Cloudesley Shovell's naval career. He was to serve four monarchs: Charles II, James II, William III and Queen Anne. The Restoration of Charles II had happened when he was ten years of age. The conflicts of the Civil War and the period of the subsequent Commonwealth were fresh in the memory of the older generation. He learnt his craft from men who had served under Cromwell, and who were aware of the fragility of power, once trust is lost.

The following chronology names the major wars of the century, and indicates actions in which Cloudesley Shovell is known to have participated.

Naval Engagements and the Career of Sir Cloudesley Shovell: a Chronology

Date	**Shovell Involvement /Event**	**Ship**
1664	To sea with Christopher Myngs	GLOUCESTER
1664	To sea with Christopher Myngs	PORTLAND
1665	To sea with Christopher Myngs	TRIUMPH
	To sea with John Narborough	ROYAL JAMES/OLD JAMES
1665 -7	SECOND ANGLO-DUTCH WAR	
1666	To sea with John Narborough	FAIRFAX
1666	Myngs dies off North Foreland	VICTORY
1666	With Narborough in West Indies	ASSURANCE
1667	To sea with John Narborough	BONADVENTURE
June 1667	DUTCH RAID ON THE MEDWAY	
1669 -71	To sea with John Narborough	SWEEPSTAKES
1672-4	THIRD ANGLO-DUTCH WAR	
1672 -80	FRANCO-DUTCH WAR	
1672	Narborough 2nd Captain; C-S MIDSHIPMAN	ROYAL PRINCE
1672	with Narborough; C-S MASTER'S MATE	FAIRFAX
1673	with Narborough;	ST. MICHAEL
June 1673	BATTLE OF TEXEL	
1673	with Narborough; C-S 2nd LIEUTENANT	HENRIETTA
1674-6	with Narborough;	HARWICH
	Boat burning off Tangiers	

1677	With Narborough	PLYMOUTH
1677	C-S promoted to CAPTAIN	SAPPHIRE
1679		PHOENIX
1679		SAPPHIRE
1680		NONSUCH
1680		SAPPHIRE
1681 - 6		JAMES GALLEY
1687		ANNE
1688 -97	WAR OF THE LEAGUE OF AUGSBURG	
1688		DOVER
1689	C-S ADMIRAL	EDGAR
	BATTLE OF BANTRY BAY	
1689-91		MONCK
1690		LONDON
1692		ROYAL WILLIAM
1692	BATTLE OF BARFLEUR	KENT
1692		DUKE
1693		BRITANNIA
1694		NEPTUNE
1695		CAMBRIDGE
1696-7		QUEEN
1699		SWIFTSURE
1701 -14	WAR OF SPANISH SUCCESSION	
1701		BARFLEUR
1702	VIGO	QUEEN
1703	GREAT STORM	TRIUMPH
1704	MALAGA CAPTURE OF GIBRALTA	BARFLEUR
1705		BRITANNIA
1707	TOULON	ASSOCIATION

Compiled by Norma Crowe after Andrew Lambert and Simon Harris

A Naval Career of Distinction

In his early years at sea, Cloudesley Shovell was serving on the ships of his two mentors. He went to sea as a midshipman in 1664, and saw action in many engagements during the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars. In 1667 the Dutch, under Admiral de Ruyters, made a bold and telling attack by sailing up the Medway and destroying many ships lying at anchor in Chatham Reach. As far as we know Cloudesley Shovell was elsewhere at the time, so was not tarnished by the shame of this most shocking event.

In 1673, he nearly lost his life in circumstances which mirrored those of the disaster in October 1707. When returning from the Mediterranean on board Fairfax as Master's Mate, the ship almost ran aground on the feared Bishop and Clerks, Isles of Scilly. Then, after action at the Battle of Texel in 1673, he was appointed Second Lieutenant on the Henrietta.

The first truly notable action of his career took place in January 1676 when he was serving on the Harwich under Sir John Narborough. Their orders were to persuade the Dey of Tripoli to release English merchant ships. Narborough sent the young Shovell to negotiate with the Dey, who treated him with distain, unwilling to listen to one of so lowly a rank. Shovell was sent back to Narborough with a flea in his ear, but he kept his cool, made a mental note of the layout of defences and the position of ships, and returned to the Harwich. Under the cover of darkness on 14th January he led 157 men on 12 longboats and pinnaces into the harbour, where they set fire to four ships at anchor without injury or loss to anyone involved. The action was hailed as a great success and reported in the press of the day. Cloudesley Shovell was presented with a gold medal and chain worth £100 by a grateful King Charles II. This was a vast sum of money, but some social commentators, such as Samuel Pepys, thought the medal too valuable an award for one of so lowly a rank.

The years 1679 to 1686 were largely spent in the Mediterranean, fighting the Barbary pirates, interspersed with skirmishes with the Spanish and French. In 1683 Shovell was caught by the Spanish Commander Conde de Acquila in Cadiz, where the Admiral demanded he salute the Spanish flagship. This was contrary to orders, and constituted a loss of face, but refusal to make the salute was fraught with danger. Shovell was surrounded by enemy vessels and very vulnerable. The Spanish threatened to firebomb Shovell's ship James Galley and this would surely have resulted in death or detention of the crew. So Shovell saluted the flag, and fired nine guns. The Spanish replied with a volley of just three shots, which, in 17th naval etiquette, was an insult to Shovell and the English crown. Back home Cloudesley Shovell was criticised and Samuel Pepys would have liked him to face a court martial for being a coward, and for failing to follow orders, but King Charles accepted that he had little option, given the circumstances.

The Struggle for Power, 1688-1714

When Charles II died in 1685 he was succeeded by his brother James, who ruled for a brief and troubled three years before he was deposed in 1688. He was replaced by his daughter Mary and her husband the Dutch William of Orange. James did not leave quietly, and although he fought and lost on English soil he did not abandon his claim to the throne. Ireland became the battle ground, with the French lending support to the deposed Catholic monarch. The Navy assisted with the transport of fighting men and equipment to Ireland, and patrolled the Channel, Irish Seas and around the French ports to ward off reinforcements. There were many engagements, and Coudesley Shovell was involved in several of them, including the Battle of Bantry Bay in 1689, and the Battle of Dublin in 1690. In the summer of 1690 he was confirmed as Admiral of the Blue by King William; Shovell was not yet 40 years old.

The War of the League of Augsburg and the War of Spanish Succession

At the same time the French had designs on the Rhineland and hoped to subjugate the German states. Hostilities flared with both the Dutch and English, and this was known as the War of the League of Augsburg. It rumbled on from 1688 to 1697.

In 1693 Cloudesley Shovell became joint commander of the Fleet, whilst still holding the rank of Admiral of the Blue. For a mere four years there was peace, before it was overwhelmed by a struggle for the Spanish throne. Charles II of Spain died without an heir. The throne was claimed by Philip, grandson of Louis XIV of France. But this was opposed by protestant states, the Dutch and English in particular. The instability resulted in the War of Spanish Succession, which lasted from 1701 until 1714.

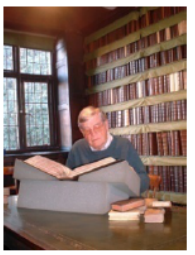
Throughout the final seven years of his life, Cloudesley Shovell was a major figure in the war at sea. At the outbreak of war he was made Admiral of the White. At first he was ordered to blockade the French Channel ports, Brest in particular, to prevent the French fleet from following Admiral Rooke south to Corunna. Shovell was frustrated by his orders and by the slender resources he had been given. He was being asked to patrol a huge area of ocean with a very small number of ships. He knew his task was almost impossible.

In a letter to Daniel Finch, Earl of Nottingham, July 1702, Shovell wrote with feeling:
'The misfortune and vice of our country is to believe ourselves better than other men, which I take to be the reason that generally we send too small a force to execute our designs; but experience has taught me that, when men are equally inured and disciplined in war, 'tis without a miracle, numbers that gain the victory.'
Shovell also wrote to the Admiralty to point out that his orders could not be carried out successfully without a substantial increase in the number of ships on patrol.

It is important to understand that Cloudesley Shovell's career included serving as a senior Admiralty manager as well as a distinguished mariner. He held the following offices associated with naval matters: Rear Admiral and Chief of the Fleet, Governor of the Naval Hospital, Greenwich, Comptroller of the Victualling Board, and Elder Brother of Trinity House. In all these roles he displayed his concern for the welfare of ordinary seamen. He worked to improve their living conditions, and their diet, and had a care for men who had served with him. Such an attitude was not commonplace, and it resulted in his being held in high regard by all ranks. In *Memoirs of the secret services of John Macky, esq. during the reigns of King William, Queen Anne and King George* ,London 1733, (*Memoires du Sieur Jean Macky, Traduits de l'Anglois* [by A.R.], pp 231, La Haye, 1733) he is described thus:
'No man understands the Affairs of the Navy better, or is beloved of the Sailors so well as he. He loves the *Constitution* of his *Country* and serves it without any *factious Aim*...he hath very good Natural Parts; familiar and plain in his conversation, dresses without Affectation..."

Thomas Plume

Tony Doe



Tony Doe is the Chairman of the Friends of Thomas Plume's Library and has been studying local and regional history since his retirement from Essex County Council in 1994. Since 2002 his main focus has been on the churchmanship of Dr Thomas Plume. His most recent activities have included the promotion of the Plume Library with the launch of the Frank and Patricia Herrmann Award (graduate level) and the Friends of Thomas Plume's Library History Prize (for 12-13 year-olds).

Thomas Plume (hereafter Plume) was born in Maldon in 1630 and after education at Chelmsford and Christ's College, Cambridge, was made Vicar of Greenwich in 1658 and Archdeacon of Rochester in 1679. He died in 1704, still holding both offices. Plume's father, also Thomas Plume (1591?-1653?), was a landowner and merchant in Maldon who served the Corporation for many years as alderman and J.P. He was also a Presbyterian as demonstrated by his being an elder of the Dengie classis, the form of church government set up by Parliament in Essex in 1648 to replace the episcopacy.

Plume's life spans some of the most momentous events in British history but it is beyond the scope of this article to attempt to relate all of them. It is, however, worth noting that during his education in Chelmsford between about 1638 and 1645 he would have been very well aware of the religious disturbances accompanying the extreme tensions between the Crown and Parliament, eventually culminating in Civil War.

Soldiers having radical persuasions were billeted in Chelmsford prior to the war against the Scots. In 1641 and 1642 they took violent exception to the vicar, John Michaelson, maintaining worship according to the Book of Common Prayer and wearing the surplice and his academic hood. He was attacked on more than one occasion and fled the town in fear of his life. The parish church had the stained glass smashed and the angels from the roof destroyed. I have concluded that the effect on Plume of these disturbances was to cause him to reject radical religion, including Presbyterianism and to support the Royalist cause. By the time he went to Cambridge in 1645 he was recording (or perhaps composing) verse in support of King Charles I, a position he was to maintain for the rest of his life.

During the early 1650s, probably after his father's death, Plume met, and was befriended by, John Hacket, (1590-1670) later to become Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield. Hacket had been vicar of Holborn in London but was deprived of this living by Parliament and lived in semi-retirement at Cheam in Surrey. It seems that at this time Plume was living in the former royal palace of Nonsuch, nearby. Hacket believed London to have been polluted by the murder of Charles I and felt unable to go there, but he needed books and Plume purchased them for him, thereby beginning an acquaintance with the London book trade around St Pauls' cathedral which was to last for the rest of his life.

Plume never married and by the time of his death in 1704 he had built up a considerable fortune which, in his lengthy will, he disposed of in no less than 73 bequests. Some of these were personal but the bulk of the estate was left to a wide variety of good causes, especially for poor clergy and education. The Plume Trust in Rochester is still active in the relief of clergy in need. At Cambridge there is the chair of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy which he established and Maldon still has his Library, containing some 7,000 books collected

by him in his lifetime. The Library also contains his pictures and his personal papers and is housed in the very fine building he had erected for it in about 1698/9.

It will be seen that Plume's building resembles a church. This is due to the fact that it was formerly St Peter's church, a medieval building which became redundant in the 16th century. It was then used as the Grammar School until the tower collapsed on the nave in 1664. Plume had the site cleared and a two-storey building erected on the site of the nave, so that the Grammar School could be held on the ground floor and his Library housed on the upper floor. This was carried out in the style of the day. He had the tower re-erected in a consciously medieval style. Entry to both floors is only possible via the tower, symbolizing the importance of the church to education and learning.

Plume building from the east.

Plume building from the west.

Plume was determined to do what he could for the church against the depredations it had suffered at the Reformation and during the Civil Wars of 1641-1651, and his library was intended for 'gentl[emen] and scholars'. During Plume's period there were approximately fifteen clergy living in Maldon, although they held livings all over the Dengie peninsula (the area between the rivers Blackwater and Crouch.) In earlier times the Dengie (the name means 'marsh') was renowned for the 'quartan ague', now known to be malaria, and it was regarded as too unhealthy for the clergy to live there, hence their residence in Maldon. Plume therefore established his library there and a weekly lecture with accompanying dinner for them.

The library contains about 7,000 books and pamphlets of which, as might be expected of a clergyman, about half are bibles, prayer books, commentaries, religious histories, church law, and many books on religious controversies. In these latter, Plume was scrupulously fair and endeavoured to show both sides of the argument which sometimes ran into several books. The rest of the library covers all the main subjects of his day, including atlases, travel, secular history, accounts of the Civil Wars, natural sciences, philosophy, mathematics, and trade. Plume was the vicar of Greenwich during the establishment there of the Royal Observatory and he collected the books on that most important quest of his time, the search for an accurate method of measuring longitude at sea. The library is a most valuable resource for the study of the history of all these topics.

Plume's personal papers are quite informative of his time at Cambridge: there is, for example, his account book from his student days and another book of anecdotes, jokes and poems from the same period. There are other notebooks but they tell us little directly of him and require careful study. He recorded (or possibly composed) verse in praise of Charles I during his time at Cambridge and other of his writing praises Royalist heroes and shows various parliamentarians in a very poor light.

I have concluded that in matters of religion, Plume was a moderate in an age when this position in matters religious was very difficult to maintain, and he strove to see both sides of the many religious controversies of his age. His practice of collecting books on both sides of these arguments also supports this view. The survival of the documents of the Rochester diocese for this period has been very poor, so we have little direct evidence of Plume's working life. It is clear, however, that he had similar views to the various bishops whom he served and there is no record of disagreements with them. As far as the wider community is concerned, I have not been able to trace any action being taken against him, either in the courts, or in print. I have concluded, therefore, that the strongly eirenic tendencies shown in his student notes foreshadowed the man in his working life and he managed to keep on good terms with many people.

This did not always make for good governance. He was for many years the chairman of the governors of the Roan School in Greenwich. The minute book for this period survives and it shows how a disciplinary matter with a member of staff dragged on for many years and was not resolved under Plume's chairmanship. After his death in 1704, a new vicar was quickly appointed and he resolved this matter without any further delay, as well as putting various other matters in order.

What of the Library today? It is still managed by the independent trust set up by Plume in his will and is largely funded by the assets he left for it. The Library is open each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 2 pm to 4 pm and each Saturday from 10 am to 12 noon. During the Heritage Open Days this year (2008) it will be open additionally on Saturday 13th September and Sunday 14th September from 2 pm to 4 pm. The address of the Library is Market Hill, Maldon, Essex, CM9 4PZ, telephone 01621 854850 or email: info@thomasplumeslibrary.co.uk . It should be noted that the Library is on the first floor and can only be accessed by a narrow stone spiral staircase on the north side of the tower. For further information on access, please contact the Librarian.

There is a printed catalogue of 1959 but it does not list all the books and a computerized catalogue will be completed later this year. It will be available online when the website is completed.

The Friends of Thomas Plume's Library was formed 21 years ago to support the Library by assisting the Trustees, financially and otherwise, to undertake the objects of the Thomas Plume's Library Trust. The Friends organize four events a year, usually a social event in February, the AGM in May, an outing (often to a library of note) in the summer and stewards are provided for the Heritage Open Days in September. New members are always welcome.

During the last twelve months the Friends have been very active in promoting the Library by launching the Frank and Patricia Herrmann Award. The Award is of £500 (£100 to the runner-up) for an essay of 3,000 to 4,000 words on a topic related to the Library, either based on the books or pamphlets, or on the life of Plume or on the conservation of the books. Only

entries to a high academic standard will be considered and the closing date for this first Award is 1st September 2008. We will be delighted to supply full details on request to the address given above or to tony.doe@btinternet.com.

In another initiative to promote the Library, The Friends of Thomas Plume's Library History Prize of £50 was established last year. This is open to all pupils in Year 8 (12 to 13 year-olds) at the Plume School in Maldon. As a result of this, some 250 pupils of the school visited the Library last year and completed a piece of work on their studies. This first experience has been very hard work for the staff and volunteers of the Library but it has been very successful and we plan to repeat it again this year.

Dr Plume's Library is a rare survival from a key period of the history of Britain. It is a living, working, reminder of that history and its riches are being made more widely available than ever before, not just to the 'gentl[emen] and scholars' for whom it was originally provided.

Some Old Roffensians

Simon Shreeve, Honorary Editor, *The Old Roffensian*

The Old Roffensian Society (called the Society *in the article which follows) represents the interests of all former pupils of King's School, Rochester. Simon Shreeve was at King's School, Rochester from 1952 to 1962. A retired Chartered Land Surveyor, he was elected Honorary Editor of The Old Roffensian magazine in 2005 in succession to Brian Nolan (an Assistant Master at the School from 1958 to 1995) who had also been Honorary Archivist for the Society.*

Part I: Church and Education

This series of three articles sets out to describe a few of the Old Roffensians who have contributed to local Medway and national life. It is the Society's convention that the letters 'OR', followed by year or years in brackets means Old Roffensian with the qualifying years, that is those spent at the School as pupils. 'KS' means King's Scholar, the holder of a scholarship awarded by the School in favour of attendance thereat.

King's School publishes an annual magazine, *The Roffensian*, which deals comprehensively with the activities of the Senior, Preparatory and Pre-Preparatory Schools during each academic year. The Society publishes annually *The Old Roffensian* covering news of current Old Roffensians as well as articles on those of earlier generations. The Society also produces other occasional papers and booklets such as *The Picture History of King's School Rochester,* compiled and designed by Brian Nolan, 2nd Edition, 2004, *The Roll of Honour of Old Roffensians and Old Choristers of Rochester Cathedral who gave their lives in the Great and Second World Wars*, November 2006, and *The History of King's School, Rochester,* edited by Richard L H Coulson, 1989.

As to the record of past pupils and academic staff of the School, the fourth and most recent edition of *The Roffensian Register*, 1937, gives the names of all *known* members of the School from 1835 to 1936. Also listed are such names of pupils and staff as had been recorded from earlier years. Unfortunately until 1877 only King's Scholars and Exhibitioners (those awarded university scholarships at the School) were generally recorded. Various attempts were made after the Second World War to update the Register and the Society has recently embarked on a project to produce a 5th Edition bringing the lists of pupils and staff of the much enlarged school up-to-date.

A considerable quantity of archives from the School and the Society has been deposited with Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and a catalogue (as a computerised Word document) is also available. Not least among this material and that already held by the Centre are past copies of *The Roffensian* and *The Old Roffensian* magazines. We very much appreciate the necessity for full, secure and local accessibility to this material, which is what the Centre in Strood provides. The Society's Honorary Archivist, Nigel Day, represents us as a Corporate Member of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

The first recorded Old Roffensian was John de Bradfield whose tomb is opposite the South Door of Rochester Cathedral at the top of the steps to the Crypt and who was Bishop of Rochester from 1278 to 1283 during the reign of Edward I. There is some evidence that John Fisher, Bishop from 1504, was also at the School. He was imprisoned in London in 1534 for opposing the divorce of Henry VIII and his appointment as cardinal by Pope Paul III led to his execution in 1535. His statue is the rightmost of the eight within the choir screen in the cathedral.

At least from the 16th Century most headmasters of the school were clergy of the Church of England and several were also incumbents of local churches. The Reverend Michael Chapman, Headmaster from 1631 to 1641, was Vicar of Halling from 1615 to 1638 and The Reverend William Dormer, Headmaster from 1718 to 1729, was Vicar of Hoo St Werbergh from 1717 to 1729. In more recent times, 1935 saw the first appointment of a lay Headmaster, Ernest William Davies, although he was later ordained. His successor, the late Reverend Canon Douglas Reginald Vicary, Headmaster from 1957, was a Canon of the Cathedral from 1952 to 1975. A number of Second Masters were also ordained. The Reverend Henry Bearblock, Second Master from 1614 to 1621, was a Minor Canon of Rochester Cathedral and Vicar of Frindsbury from 1620 to 1626.

Of the many Old Roffensians who entered the Church, The Reverend Edward Terry OR(1600-08) became Chaplain to the East India Company and The Venerable Joshua Childrey OR(c 1635) was Archdeacon of Salisbury in 1664. The Very Reverend John Ireland OR(1780) was Dean of Westminster from 1816 to 1842 and The Very Reverend John Oakley OR(1847-52) was Dean of Carlisle from 1881 and then of Manchester from 1883 to 1890.

The Very Rev John Storrs OR(1962-66), Dean of Rochester 1913-28, from the archives of The Old Roffensian Society

Born in Canada c1847, The Very Reverend John Storrs was at the school from 1862 to 1866 and was Dean of Rochester from 1913 to 1928. Ordained in 1871 he had risen to become Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral in 1900 and Rural Dean of Westminster in 1902. At Rochester he was President of the Old Roffensian Society from 1920. Following his death in 1928 an oak memorial screen was erected on the north side of Rochester Cathedral south nave transept which formed part of the school (now Lady) Chapel. One of the school's houses is named after John Storrs. Of the Cathedral bells recast in 1921, one is dedicated to the memory of his second son, Lieutenant Francis Edmund Storrs RNVR who died on the eve of Armistice Day, 1918.

Of the Old Roffensians who were at King's in the last century, The Right Reverend Douglas John Wilson OR(1910-1916) became Bishop of Honduras in 1945 and of Trinidad in 1950. The Venerable Michael Warnford Rene Brown OR(1924-34) was Archdeacon of Nottingham from 1960 to 1977. The Right Reverend Ambrose Walter Marcus Weekes was a non-singing member of the Rochester Cathedral Choir School from 1926 until 1934, three years before it closed, Cathedral Choristers thereafter being admitted to King's School. He has had a distinguished career in the Church of England including appointments as Canon and then Dean of Gibraltar Cathedral between 1971 and 1977, Auxiliary and then Suffragan Bishop of Europe between 1977 and 1986 and finally Assistant Bishop of Rochester to 1988. The Reverend John Stanton KS(1929-37) was an Assistant Master at Tonbridge School before being ordained in 1952. In 1959 he was appointed Headmaster of Blundell's School, Tiverton, Devon; in retirement he is a most accomplished water colour artist.

Many other Old Roffensians joined the teaching profession, some returning to their old school. The late Reverend Herbert Malcolm Bury OR(1935-36), whose father had taught at the School, returned as an Assistant Master from 1953 to 1959 and again from 1963 to 1968.

He was ordained in 1969 and until his retirement in 1993 was Vicar of Halsted and Knockholt.

The late Reverend Malcolm Bury OR(1935-36), from the archives of The Old Roffensian Society

Colonel Roy John Trett OR(1932-36), who had previously been a Cathedral Chorister for four years, was an Assistant Master at King's from 1938 to 1939 and again from 1957 to 1961. He compiled a *Guide to the Service Memorials, Rochester Cathedral* in 1990 and in 1997 retired after 36 years as a Cathedral Steward. Christopher John Nickless OR(1955-65) was an Assistant Master from 1968 to 2007. He was Deputy Master of the Junior School from 1982 and Headmaster of the Pre-Preparatory School from its opening in 1988 until 1991 and the Headmaster of the Preparatory School until 2001.

Of earlier Old Roffensians, The Reverend James Leigh Joynes OR(1832-36) taught at Eton College from 1849 to 1887, becoming Lower Master in 1878. Frederick Cairns Hubbard KS(1843) was Principal of Agra College. A brother, Alfred Roots (not an Old Roffensian) served with a SPG mission in Delhi. Both were murdered by mutineers in 1857. They were the sons of Thomas Hubbard, a tailor with premises in Rochester High Street. Sir Edwin Arnold OR(1846-50) was Principal of the Government College in Poona for ten years from 1851 and Editor of *The Daily Telegraph* in 1873. He was created a Knight Commander of the Indian Empire in 1888 and was President of the Old Roffensian Society from 1889 to 1904. The Reverend John Sisley KS(1861-69) was Chaplain and Professor of English Literature at Hellmuth College, London, Ontario from 1889 to 1890. At King's during the same years as John Storrs, The Right Reverend James Edward Cowell Welldon was Master of Dulwich College in 1883 and Master of Harrow School from 1885 to 1898. Herbert Yorke Langhorne KS(1888-90) was one of six sons, all Old Roffensians, of the Rev John Langhorne, Headmaster of the School from 1877 to 1893. Herbert was Headmaster of Aldenham Park School, Shropshire, in 1933.

Major Edward Charles Alexander Firman KS was a Cathedral Chorister from 1912 to 1914 and then at King's until 1919. He returned to the School as an Assistant Master in 1926, while from 1936 until 1964, he was Headmaster of Plymouth College Preparatory School. Robert Simon Funnell OR(1958-63) taught at Shrewsbury School and Eastbourne College before becoming Headmaster of King's College, Taunton in 1988. Dr Timothy Francis Hawkes OR(1965-71) was appointed Headmaster of King's School, Parramatta, Sydney, the oldest independent boy's school in Australia, in 1997.

I am indebted to Brian Nolan, Assistant Master at King's School from 1958 to 1995 and his compilation, *Eminent Roffensians* (4th Edition, Old Roffensian Society, 1998) for assistance with this article.

In Part Two, Simon Shreeve will provide details of some of the Old Roffensians who served in the armed forces in some of the conflicts of the late 19th Century, as well as during and after the two world wars.

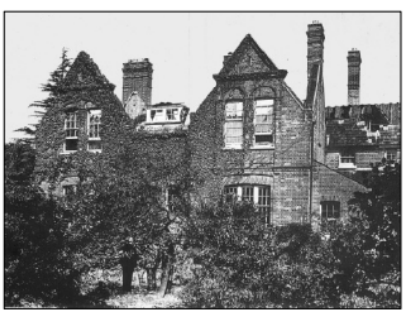
The Homes for Little Boys in Hextable, Swanley, Kent

Greg Daxter

Greg Daxter was born on Hitler's birthday in 1942! He grew up in Hextable and went to three schools: The Homes for Little Boys, as a day boy, Dartford West Secondary and Dartford Grammar School. He taught at Slade Green Secondary School and then St George's School, Gravesend, as well as spending several years as an assistant at Furness School, formally The Homes. In 1964 he attended theological college and was ordained as a Church of England priest in 1969. He has worked in parishes in Devon, Essex and Kent and eventually combined this with teaching in Wilmington, Kent, returning to Furness School until 1987. He retired as chaplain at Exeter Cathedral School in 200, since which time Greg has lived in Torquay with his wife Lorna, with whom he has two daughters.

Reliving the Memories

"In 1940 [14th September] we had air raid warnings at night. Some of the older boys like 'Todd' Sweeney and 'Fatty' Rule were on Air Raid Patrol. When the siren sounded we had to jump out of bed, get dressed, grab our gasmasks and proceed in the dark, with our matrons, to the underground zigzag trench, beneath the orchard in front of Furness House. We spent many a sleepless night down there, for about three years; over 130 of us, boys and staff. Eventually we had bunk beds and *facilities*. We had no idea of the danger we were in at times. The nearest thing to panic was when one of the matrons came running through the trench shouting that everything was on fire. In the morning when we came out of the trench we could see the burnt-out shells of five houses, and all our possessions, smouldering in the rubble." These are the words of Brian and David Fisher, who were at the Homes for Little Boys throughout the war.



Furness House after the air raid

On Saturday 28th May 2008 a group of Old Boys, and descendants of others, returned to Hextable to celebrate the first ever reunion in 125 years. Several went straight to the site of the trench described above; it was overgrown but seemingly still intact, untouched for 63 years. Many of those who attended recalled their boyhood days in Furness House and looked for their initials scratched on the red-brick walls. For some this had been their home for ten years, and they remembered it like the backs of their hands. Others had served in the Navy before, during and after the Second World War. It is said that before the war something like 4,000 boys had attended the Homes in the course of their history.

A Piece of Social History

The founding fathers of the Homes were Robert Culling Hanbury, M.P. for Middlesex, William Willans, a teacher at Islington Ragged School, and Albert Charles, Secretary of the Reformatory Union. In the spring of 1864 they made plans to renovate the old Poor House in Tottenham. After several weeks eight boys arrived; by July there were 64 and in August 77.

Tottenham Poor House off the High Road

Soon more space was needed and Mrs Hanbury took over the old workhouse in Essendon, Hertfordshire; there were also connections with Kingsbury School in Edgware. However, after a fire in Essendon and illness in Edgware, the group resolved to build more Cottage Homes in the countryside. In 1866 they purchased 19 acres of land near Farningham in Kent for £1,800. The Homes were to be family houses where *parents* could care for the boys. There would be a school and workshops where older boys could learn a trade: carpentry, tailoring, gardening, farming, boot making and printing.

The Stables at Swanley

Growing their own crops

In 1866 the Prince and Princess of Wales laid the foundation stone and by the 1870s 11 houses were built. Yet more orphans were coming from all over the country and by the 1880s the houses were full. It was evident that another site was needed, and eventually land was acquired in Hextable, near Swanley. On 20th July, 1883 the royal couple laid the foundation stone of the Swanley Homes. In the years that followed six houses were built and named after their benefactors: The Mothers' Home, through the generosity of the Mothers of England; Sidney Hills, Mary Ann Leicester, Lady Morrison (of Snaresbrook), Passmore Edwards, and David Lindsay. The Homes were run in much the same way as at Farningham with boys being trained to earn their own living.

This 1896 engraving by Lance Calkin, described as a *Scene at the House Door in the Swanley Home* is a poignant reminder of how the Homes gained their residents.

The Calkin engraving was found in a Homes for Little Boys magazine dated 1896; provenance unknown, even by the Calkin family.

The Naval Connection

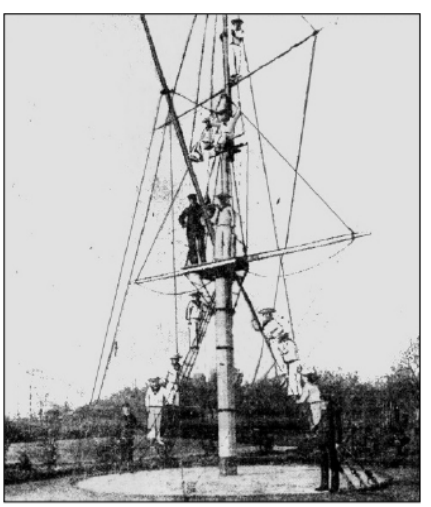
In 1904 Christopher Furness of the Furness Withy Line, based in Hartlepool, made a generous offer to build a house for boys wishing to enter the Merchant Marine Service. He famously said, "It is a reproach to the nation which boasts naval supremacy… that our trading

vessels should not be manned by our own countrymen." Lady Furness House was opened on 22nd May, 1909 by her Ladyship, watched through the hedge in Puddledock Lane by the girls of the village, including my mother. Thereafter the Swanley Homes became known as The Naval Orphanage. Over the years many boys came to Swanley from all the major shipping centres around the country, not least from the Medway area.

One of the first boys to join the Homes and go to sea was Hubert Ellis, born in 1902, his father died two years later. His mother found it difficult to look after him and he was sent to Swanley. He wrote, "We spent a lot of time outdoors in the gardens and orchard. If we could get our hands on the fruit we would. To keep us healthy we were given a weekly dose of mineral oil; I remember the taste to this day! We studied several subjects, including navigation. There was a mast and flagpole in the grounds. We had a very disciplined education, which prepared us for the navy. On my fourteenth birthday my mother visited the school and the head teacher told me that if I went with her she would expect me to support her. He said if I didn't want to do this, I should leave by a separate door. I never regretted my decision to go with my mother. I got a job with Furness Withy and I travelled to many foreign places including Russia, South America and Africa." Hubert settled in the United States, from where his daughter came to join us at the reunion in May 2008.

Sailor boys on parade

Seamanship classes in the School Hall



The mast as remembered by Hubert Ellis

The World Wars

It is said that over 500 Old Boys served in the First World War from both Homes. I have 52 names of Old Boys who were casualties in WWI and 22 names of WWII casualties but they are all listed as having been at Farningham. Unfortunately there are no names of Old Swanley Boys. A Homes' Journal in 1925 explained, "Doubtless our Roll of Honour is

incomplete because many Old Boys had no friends to tell us of their death. If *anyone* should know of others we would be glad to add them to our list." I make that plea again because there *were* Old Boys from the Swanley Homes who *did* die in both World Wars.

William Henry Charles Lawrence, from Swanley, survived his Service in the Merchant Navy. His home was in Glasgow but he went to the Homes at the age of six in the late 1920s. He was apprenticed on a merchant ship when he was 16. On 4th July 1940 his ship, Briarwood, was attacked by a bomber, and he was awarded the OBE for gallantry. He rose to the rank of Captain and took part in the early Arctic Convoys. When the Commodore's ship was sunk, Captain Lawrence, who was a Vice-Commodore, took over his duties and according to the *London Gazette*, "performed them with single success during the remainder of a very arduous operation." On the return passage, when the convoy was again attacked, Captain Lawrence was largely responsible for its escape from five assaults by German destroyers and he was made a C.B.E.

We are gathering many more stories like this from each decade of 125 years of Homes' history. With its naval links boys often came to Swanley from Pembroke House in Gillingham, between 1920 and 1950. It would be marvellous to make contact with them. I have some 73 names from the Pembroke list and there are many more. Here are some of the names and their dates that I have found: A Allan 1930-33, C Birmingham 1943-46, D Chawner 1945-50, JE Cook 1945-51, JV Daff 1940-48, PF Fitzgibbon 1940-48, R Fletcher 1946-56, VF Gilkes 1928, RJ Godding 1945-47, A Granados 1943-46, R Hobday 1930s, R Joyce 1935, S Kirby 1930s, N Lifton 1930s, EK Marner 1942-43, A Peacock 1928-34, A Riddiford 1930s, B Saunders 1935-39, L Shannon 1930s, B Vallance 1943-1945 and F Watson 1930s. Some of them appear in old Homes' magazines like *Bits and Pieces*, and others I can recall from my own days at Swanley.

We have several copies of *Bits and Pieces,* the Swanley Boys' own magazine, in 1947. Here are quotes about two boys who I believe had Medway connections. "March 1947… at long last 'Gandy' has been accepted for the Merchant Navy. He left us to join his ship on February 6th. The good wishes of us all go with him as he begins his new life… Another boy to leave us on 9th February was Roger Godding; he is well known as our magazine artist."

Furness School Today

Today Furness School caters for senior boys with special needs and the history of the Homes for Little Boys forms an important part of their curriculum. We have already produced two books of memoirs called *Swanley Homes Remembered* and I am planning to write the book of its long and amazing history. These, together with the interest we have had in the reunion, makes us realise how many people there are, here and abroad, who have vivid memories and connections with the Homes. Every boy had a story to tell, tragic, heroic, amusing and worthy of being recorded as an essential part of our social history. Oh, and about the trench with which this story began: plans are afoot to try and restore it to its former glory.

All the photographs included in this article are from the Furness School Homes for Little Boys Collection.

If you know of anyone, who has connections with the Swanley Homes, or know anything about its history, please contact Mrs Amanda Thomas, Editor, The Clock Tower, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5NS or email at amanda@ajthomas.com. We will be happy to pass any information on to Greg Daxter.

The Victoria County History at MALSC

Dr Sandra Dunster

Dr Sandra Dunster was appointed by the University of Greenwich as Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone (EPE) *in October 2007. With the help of volunteers, she is researching and writing a history of the Medway Towns, to be completed by February 2010. She previously taught local and regional history at the University of Kent. Sandra was born and raised in Whitstable and, after 25 years absence, returned to live there in 1999.*

Volunteers – The Making of the Medway Towns Project

The Medway Towns project is beginning to shape up nicely. The seemingly impossible task of cramming the 350 year history of Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham and Strood into a slim volume with only 60,000 words appears rather more manageable than it did at the end of 2007 when the project began.

This is mainly due to the activities of a dedicated band of volunteers who are steadily working their way through previously untapped source materials. There are now 27 volunteers signed up to help with the research. This number is made up a combination of 'old hands' so called because of their experience, having worked with Dr Andrew Hann on the Medway Valley project, and 'new recruits' who have joined in the past six months.

The old hands, have slipped into the new project seamlessly. In a very short space of time, literally thousands of census entries have been transcribed, previously unexplored information from 17th and 18th century probate inventories has been retrieved, and a study has been made of the documents and images relating to the attempt to establish the Medway Towns as a health spa in the early eighteenth century. New material has been unearthed from the depths of the National Archives at Kew relating to the workforce that built ships on the Medway in the late sixteenth century. Others are working on biographies of Medway inhabitants. And this is just the beginning…..

Dr Sandra Dunster (sixth from left, pointing) with some 'old hands' and 'new recruits' sharing new data for the EPE project

The new recruits should not be underestimated. They have thrown themselves into the project with a level of enthusiasm that more than compensates for their lack of experience, bringing skills from their own research or learning new skills fast. Some have joined the old hands in transcription activities; some have taken on new projects of their own, such as exploring criminal activity in the Medway Towns, the development of the railway network or doing the groundwork for an architectural survey. Two have responded to my appeal to help me get the *England's Past for Everyone* (*EPE*) website up to date, which will mean that the new data collected for the project will be available to all, once we have all received the relevant training.

Without this willing band of workers the task in hand would be impossible within the time scale that is set. The book must be completed by the end of February 2010. The work undertaken by the volunteers allows me to get a head start on processing the data we are collecting and I have already begun to write up sections of the work. This gives me hope that together we can meet our deadline. I can never thank the volunteers enough for the work that they do so willingly.

Editor's Footnotes

Amanda Thomas is a freelance writer and public relations consultant. Born in Chatham, but now based in Hertfordshire, she belongs to several historical organisations, including the Kent Family History Society, the North West Kent Family History Society, and The Council for British Archaeology; she has a degree in Italian from the University of Kent and is a member of their alumni association. Amanda is delighted to have recently been made a full member of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists.

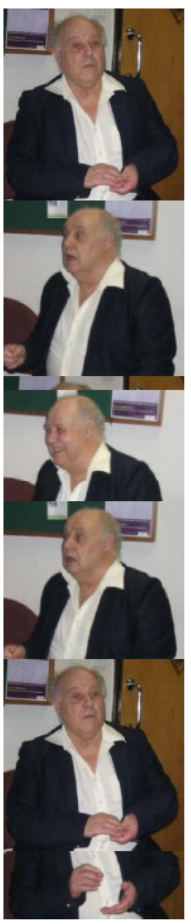
The end of the academic year is generally a watershed even for those who don't have children at school, or are awaiting examination results. Fascinating that even today when communities no longer spill out into the fields to gather in the harvest do we consider the summer holidays a time to take stock and make resolutions, just as we do on December 31st.

For us at the Friends of Medway Archives the past couple of months have most definitely been a watershed, not just with staff departures but in our own family lives, and as FOMA continues to grow and flourish. One of the keys to FOMA's success is communication with members, and whilst we will continue this via the CityArk, FOMA and *The Clock Tower* websites, we have decided to take on a professional printer for *The Clock Tower*. Back in April I met with Tessa Towner, FOMA Chairman, Jean Skilling, FOMA Treasurer, and Ray Maisey, of Rabbit Hutch Printers in Cuxton, to discuss this exciting new project. As Ray is based near to the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, and takes a big interest in our activities, we are delighted that he will be printing *The Clock Tower* for us.

As a result, the A5 version of *The Clock Tower* will be laid out rather differently from before, due to restrictions with space and the use of colour. Hopefully, as you read this, I will be sitting back in the sunshine taking stock of these past few months and smiling at the thought of all the wonderful correspondence I have received. At the same time, you may be sipping a sangria or ouzo and thinking of penning a postcard to me on what you think of *The Clock Tower's new* design.

Witheridge's Witterings...

FOMA Vice Chairman, John Witheridge, has the last word...
"One of the variants of the name Witheridge is Whitheridge *or even* Whitteridge. *Its Saxon name* Wiriga. *i.e. Doomsday Book 1068 and also the Exeter Book 1086. Its British name is as in Old Briton,* Widdyrydg, *the* dd *being the early form of* th, *and as noted in the Welsh language. In fact, and to great interest the world over, we Witheridges rival Heinz for 57 varieties!! This could account for the reason why I am always in the soup, though being originally from Devon I presume this to be swede and turnip."*



Did I tell you the story, about a great friend of mine? This man revered and known as *Mr Genealogy*? I owe him a great deal and you all will gnash your teeth at him for he is responsible for my wit being unleashed upon you all.

His name was Iain Swynnerton and in his time he was probably president of virtually all the major county family history societies. As you will know, or at least some will know, he also used to give talks and lectures all over the world and he would carry out researches for friends whilst on his travels.

Well, this story starts with an intended lecture of Swynnerton's at the York Minster. A lady from America (shall we call her Ms West?) rang him up to ask if he would do a search in York whilst he was next there. She gave him details for this search.

Swynnerton, doing his best, but failing miserably, rang her back to acquire more information. He set to once again, but reward was still as elusive, so he rang her again explaining he had only one more day to spare. What new factor could she supply? Scraping the barrel, he returned the next day, again to no avail. He rang Ms West that night to admit defeat, but it was too much for his client, who declared:

"I understood that you were an expert in this field. Everyone who is anyone has heard of the Great West Window at York Minster!"

The 100th Medway Barge Match

On Saturday 31st May 2008, FOMA members boarded the Kingswear Castle for the first trip of the summer to follow the 100th Medway Barge Match. Elaine Gardner, FOMA Committee Member, took some wonderful photographs of the race which features barges from Medway's past:

Edme, the eventual winner, at the start of the race

Cygnet, 1881, sails past 21st century shipping

Repertor, the first barge to reach the outer buoy

Becalmed barges